

Best Practices
Aggression Replacement Training
WASHINGTON STATE
3/10/99

Initial Engagement of Youth and Families Prior To Starting ART Groups

Meeting with Youth and Families prior to the ART group beginning positively impacts youth attendance and youth performance. It's important that facilitators:

- “Sell” and heavily market youth and families on the benefits of ART. Essentially, an upbeat facilitator who emphasizes that ART will be a positive experience more effectively engages youth and families.
- Emphasize incentive programs upfront with youth. Highlighting tangible material rewards for good performance motivates youth and has positive effects on attendance and behavior.
- Constructing ‘wrap-around’ approaches positively impacts attendance. When POs, Supervisors and even Administrators join in the effort of selling ART to youth and families, performance and attendance are enhanced.
- Establish parental buy-in early on and reinforce it continuously. When families are on the team, are aware of what’s happening in ART group, and actively reinforce the importance of ART, youth performance and attendance is enhanced.
- Create peer and family support in pre-ART group meetings or in 1:1 meetings. These meetings pay off later in better performance and attendance. Reasons for having group meetings is that they can be more efficient and deliver a consistent message. However, some youth will need extra time in order to engage in ART. One-on-one approaches are quite effective in these cases.
- Establish structures in PO departments for sanctioning for non-attendance. It establishes clarity; however, emphasizing sanctions (in absence of incentives and ‘selling’ the program) can create youth resistance. The experience is that a ‘sanction-only’ approach decreases attendance and youth performance.

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Role Of Probation

- Probation officers should be partners in ART interventions. Sites where POs understand and support ART, where facilitator/PO roles are established, and where substantive communication is continuous have stronger ART groups.
- POs who reinforce the ART curriculum with probationers enhance youth performance and attendance. POs who are not involved or become involved only to sanction are less effective in supporting ART interventions.
- PO/Facilitator collaboration on particularly difficult cases enhance youth attendance and performance.
- Facilitators who don't have PO/Department support struggle more with attendance and youth performance.

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Incentives

- Programs that contain a mix of short-term, long-term, individual, group and random incentives positively impact youth performance, behavior, motivation and attendance. Programs that don't use incentives are not advised.
- Incentive programs offer the benefit of engaging youth early on and helping avoid 'burn-out' in the later stages of the intervention.
- Incentives that focus on non-material (praise, encouragement) *and* material rewards create a more effective balance of youth motivators.
- Good ART performance should be shared with POs and families.

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Attendance

- Attendance is enhanced by 1) successfully selling both youth and families on ART, 2) PO/ART facilitator collaboration and initial/on-going communication, 3) establishing a best practice incentive program, 4) emphasizing positives and finding ways to continuously motivate youth through praise and encouragement.
- Policies on attendance that are flexible, and can individually match any sanctions to a particular youth's needs, give ART facilitators more options when dealing with attendance problems.
- Youth who know a sanction will occur play less 'games' around attendance. This does not mean that rigid attendance rules are recommended. Such rules tend to lock facilitators into sanctions that may or may not be appropriate for every youth's circumstances.
- On average, positives and incentives create better attendance and performance than negatives and sanctions.